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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS ON U.S. AND AFRICA

(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

BLACK AMERICANS ARE TAKING A GROWING INTEREST IN U.S. RELATIONS WITH AFRICA -- AN INTEREST REFLECTED IN THE CHANGING FOCUS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS. THE CURRENT CHAIRPERSON OF THE CAUCUS IS YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE, CONGRESSWOMAN FROM CALIFORNIA, AND THE FIRST WOMAN TO HEAD THE GROUP SINCE IT WAS FORMALLY ORGANIZED IN 1971. VOA'S LINDA MCKEEVER TALKED WITH CONGRESSWOMAN BURKE AND HAS THIS REPORT:

VOICE:

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS IS A GROUP OF 17 BLACK AMERICAN LEGISLATORS WHO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS OF CONCERN TO BLACK AMERICANS AND THEN ACT AS A PRESSURE GROUP WITHIN CONGRESS TO HELP SOLVE THOSE PROBLEMS. IN THE BEGINNING, ALL OF THE CAUCUS' ATTENTION WAS FOCUSSED ON DOMESTIC ISSUES, SUCH AS JOBS, HOUSING, EDUCATION, AND HEALTH. BUT IN RECENT MONTHS, THE FOCUS HAS SHIFTED SOMEWHAT. ACCORDING TO CONGRESSWOMAN YVONNE BURKE, NEW LEADER OF THE CAUCUS, THE ORGANIZATION HAS TAKEN ON A NEW, INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION WHICH CENTERS ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH AFRICA:

TAPE: CUT ONE

"ONE OF THE THINGS THAT ANGOLA HAS BROUGHT TO THE FOREFRONT IN THE UNITED STATES IS THIS WHOLE QUESTION OF AN AFRICAN POLICY, AND EXACTLY WHAT WILL BE THE POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES WITH THE EMERGING AFRICAN NATIONS, AND SOME OF THOSE NATIONS WITH TREMENDOUS NATURAL RESOURCES, SO THE BLACK CAUCUS HAS FOUND ITSELF IN A POSITION SIMILAR TO OTHER CAUCUSES -- FOR INSTANCE, THE JEWISH CAUCUS, AS IT RELATES TO ISRAEL, THE GREEK CAUCUS AS IT RELATES TO GREECE...WE HAVE FOUND OURSELVES IN A NEW ROLE, WHICH IS A LIAISON KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AFRICAN NATIONS."

VOICE:

CONGRESSWOMAN BURKE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS SINCE HER ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON IN EARLY 1973, AND DURING THIS PERIOD, SHE SAYS, THE CAUCUS HAS GROWN IN PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE -- GAINING THE RECOGNITION OF MORE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AS WELL AS LEADERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS, SUCH AS LABOR AND INDUSTRY. FOR ITS AFRICAN EXPERTISE, THE CAUCUS ALSO DRAWS ON THE RESOURCES OF ONE OF ITS BEST-KNOWN MEMBERS, AND FORMER LEADER CHARLES DIGGS, CONGRESSMAN FROM MICHIGAN AND CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES, FOOD AND ENERGY.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FORMER HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, CONGRESSMAN DIGGS HONED HIS REPUTATION AS THE LEADING EXPERT ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS WITHIN THE U.S. CONGRESS. BUT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CAUCUS HAVE, IN RECENT YEARS, SOUGHT TO BECOME BETTER INFORMED ABOUT AFRICAN PROBLEMS AND HOW THE UNITED STATES MIGHT HELP TO OVERCOME SOME OF THOSE PROBLEMS. MOST INCLUDING MRS. BURKE HAVE ALREADY VISITED AFRICA AT THE INVITATION OF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. AND HERE IN WASHINGTON, THEY ALL MEET FROM TIME TO TIME WITH AMBASSADORS FROM THE AFRICAN NATIONS.

ACCORDING TO CONGRESSWOMAN BURKE, THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS HAS DEVELOPED KEY PRIORITY ISSUES WHERE AFRICA IS CONCERNED:

TAPE: CUT TWO

"WE BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST HAVE AN AFRICAN POLICY. WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THAT AFRICAN POLICY BE ONE OF SUPPORTING FREEDOM, SUPPORTING THE CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY. THERE ARE VERY FEW DEMOCRACIES LEFT IN THE WORLD. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD TAKE A POSITION OF SAYING THAT WE BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE A RIGHT TO DETERMINE THEIR DESTINY, AND THAT COLONIALISM NO LONGER HAS A PLACE IN THE WORLD, AND

THAT MAJORITY RULE IS A CONCEPT THAT NOT ONLY DO WE BELIEVE IN, BUT WE HAPPEN TO HAVE THIS AS A BASIS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY. SO WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE UNITED STATES TAKES A STRONG POSITION OF SAYING THAT THE EMERGING AFRICAN NATIONS ARE NATIONS THAT HAVE A RIGHT TO MAJORITY RULE AND TO GUARANTEES -- THE SAME KIND OF GUARANTEES WE TRY TO SAY WE WOULD HAVE WITHIN OUR OWN COUNTRY."

VOICE:

COMMENTING ON THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. AID TO AFRICA, AND TRADE WITH AFRICAN NATIONS, CONGRESSWOMAN BURKE HAS THIS TO SAY:

TAPE: CUT THREE

"OUR ROLE HISTORICALLY HAS BEEN ONE OF GIVING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, ARMS -- IT HAS BEEN ONE OF ESTABLISHING TRADE, AND THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT ONE OF THE TOP THREE (NATIONS) THAT WE PURCHASE OIL FROM IS AN AFRICAN NATION, SO THAT I WOULD HOPE THAT WE ESTABLISH TRADE WITH THE FREE AFRICAN NATIONS. BUT I ALSO WOULD HOPE THAT IN CARRYING OUT THIS AFRICAN POLICY, THAT WE WOULD RECOGNIZE WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO HAVE SOME OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THAT POLICY...AND IN PARTICULAR, I BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY WAY WE'RE GOING TO SEE FREEDOM IN AFRICA IS IF WE ARE VERY DIRECT IN STATING TO SOUTH AFRICA THAT WE ARE UNCOMFORTABLE IN TRADING WITH THEM, AND UNLESS WE ACCEPT SOME OF THE VIEWS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS. AND I WOULD HOPE THAT WE WOULD REPEAL THE BYRD AMENDMENT AS IT RELATES TO RHODESIAN CHROME. WE WOULD AGREE THAT IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE AND CONSISTENT THAT WE WOULD CONTINUE TO PURCHASE RHODESIAN CHROME."

VOICE:

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS MAKES ITS VIEWS KNOWN TO OTHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN REGULAR SESSIONS, SPECIAL MEETINGS AND PERSONAL CONTACTS. IT ALSO WORKS CLOSELY WITH OFFICIALS IN CHARGE OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, OFFERING VALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS, AS THEY ARISE. THE CAUCUS HAS ALSO MET WITH SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER. AND...CONGRESSWOMAN BURKE SAYS SHE IS DELIGHTED WITH DOCTOR KISSINGER'S PLANS TO VISIT AFRICA IN LATE APRIL.

JS/RCS